

Message Text

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46

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

SAM-01 OMB-01 DRC-01 /114 W
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1698

USCINCEUR

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

USEUCOM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1217

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: ISRAEL'S CONTINUING GOVERNMENT CRISIS:
NEW ELECTION OR NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT

BONN AND BRUSSELS FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

USEUCOM FOR POLAD

REF: TEL AVIV 1168

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1. MRS MEIR'S SURPRISE ANNOUNCEMENT AT CONCLUSION OF MARCH 3
LABOR ALIGNMENT KNESSET FACTION AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE JOINT

MEETING THAT, INSTEAD OF FORMING MINORITY GOVERNMENT, SHE WOULD RETURN HER MANDATE TO PRESIDENT KATZIR HAS SET STAGE FOR ONE OF TWO POSSIBILITIES IN UNFOLDING DOMESTIC CRISIS, UNLESS MRS MEIR CHANGES HER MIND: A) NEW ELECTION AND CONTINUATION OF CURRENT GOVERNMENT IN INTERIM, OR B) FORMATION OF NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. EITHER OF THESE PROSPECTS INVOLVES STRONG CHANCE OF EITHER BREAK-UP OF LABOR-MAPAM ALIGNMENT OR, STILL WORSE, SUBSTANTIAL DEFECTIONS FROM LABOR PARTY (EITHER OF RAFI FACTION, OR PERHAPS OF INDIVIDUAL MAPAI DOVES, SUCH AS BEN-AHARON AND ELIAV).

2. MOUNTING OPPOSITION WITHIN LABOR PARTY TO FORMATION OF MINORITY GOVERNMENT WAS IMPORTANT FACTOR IN MRS MEIR'S DECISION, ALTHOUGH PUNDITS ARE NOW CLAIMING TO KNOW THAT SHE HAD BEEN CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF STEPPING ASIDE FOR SOME TIME. WHILE DAYAN'S RAFI FACTION HAD DECIDED OVER WEEKEND TO SUPPORT MRS MEIR IN KNESET AND SEEK CHANGE OF DAYAN-PERES DECISION NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW CABINET, BOTH DAYAN AND PERES AT MARCH 3 MEETING NOTED ABOVE HELD TO THEIR REFUSAL; FURTHERMORE, DAYAN REAFFIRMED HIS SUPPORT FOR BROAD-BASED GOVERNMENT INCLUDING LIKUD. AMONG NON-RAFI LABORITES, MRS MEIR'S CLOSE ASSOCIATE AHARON YARIV AND HAIFA MAYOR JOSEPH ALMOGI CAME OUT IN LAST FEW DAYS FOR ENLARGED GOVERNMENT.

3. AT MARCH 3 MEETING, ALMOGI, OFER, ELIAV AND BEN-AHARON EXPRESSED STRONG RESERVATIONS OVER IDEA OF MINORITY GOVERNMENT. ALMOGI, WIDELY REGARDED AS STANDING ABOVE FACTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS, MADE ELOQUENT APPEAL FOR NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT GIVEN "DEEP DEPRESSION" OF NATIONAL MORALE. ELIAV, IN BLISTERING ATTACK, SAID THAT OUTGOING GOVERNMENT AND PROPOSED ONE HAD FAILED "IN EVERY POSSIBLE SPHERE" AND THAT HE HAD NO CONFIDENCE IN ANY OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED. MRS MEIR TOLD ELIAV: "WE DID NOT FAIL. WE DID NOT LEAD OTHERS TO FAILURE. WE ACHIEVED GREAT THINGS." MRS MEIR ALSO ENGAGED IN BITTER EXCHANGE WITH OFER, NOTING THAT HE HAD WRITTEN IN DAVAR WEEKEND EDITION THAT SHE WAS PROPOSING TO ESTABLISH A "ROTTEN GOVERNMENT." OFER RESPONDED THAT HE WAS AGAINST OLD TIMERS BUT SUPPORTED NEW FACES IN PROPOSED CABINET. FOREGOING GIVES FLAVOR OF BITTERNESS

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OF CURRENT INTRA-PARTY SQUABBLING.

4. AT THIS JUNCTURE, EVENTS CAN UNFOLD IN ONE OF TWO WAYS:

A) PRESIDENT KATZIR AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH ALL PARTIES CAN ASK ANOTHER KNESSET MEMBER, PRESUMABLY FROM LABOR PARTY, TO TRY TO FORM NEW GOVERNMENT. (WE THINK THAT THIS EFFORT WOULD LEAD TO NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT AS CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE NO MORE PROPITIOUS FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO RECONSTITUTE OUTGOING COALITION OR MINORITY GOVERNMENT THAN THEY WERE FOR MRS MEIR.) OR B) KNESSET CAN VOTE TO HOLD NEW

ELECTION AND DETERMINE DATE ON WHICH IT WOULD BE HELD. IN THIS CASE, PRESENT GOVERNMENT LED BY MRS MEIR AND INCLUDING DAYAN AS DEFMIN WOULD CONTINUE IN CARETAKER CAPACITY UNTIL FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. NEW ELECTON COULD TAKE PLACE THREE MONTHS AFTER KNESSET VOTES ON IT, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT IT COULD BE DEFERRED FOR AS MUCH AS 6-9 MONTHS WITHOUT RAISING LEGAL PROBLEM.

5. ONE USUALLY WELL INFORMAEED OBSERVER (MEISLES) HAS SPECULATED TO US THAT MAJOR ELEMENT OF CURRENT CRISIS, ALTHOUGH NOT ONLY FACTOR LEADING TO MRS MEIR'S DECISION, IS DAYAN POWER PLAY TO SET STAGE FOR HIS OWN COMEBACK AFTER AGRANAT COMMISSION CONCLUDES ITS INVESTIGATION. ACCORDING TO THIS DAYAN MANEUVER VERSION, EITHER NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT OR NEW ELECTION MEET DAYAN'S PURPOSE OF HAVING GIVEN APPEARANCE OF BEING READY TO RESIGN WHILE PROTECTING HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE. DESPITE DAYAN'S REPEATED STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR MRS MEIR AND ANY GOVERNMENT SHE WOULD HEAD, HE AND MRS MEIR IN FACT HAD ALREADY REACHED POLITICAL DIVIDE OVER ISSUE OF NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT. IN EFFECT, DAYAN'S POSITION GUARANTEED THAT MRS MEIR COULD NOT ENJOY SUPPORT OF ENTIRE PARTY.

6. AS OF THIS MOMENT, PRESSURE FOR NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT IS VERY STRONG. LABOR PARTY'S DIFFICULTY WITH BROAD GOVERNMENT INCLUDING LIKUD IS THAT IT MEANS ALMOST GUARANTEED SPLIT OF PARTY. LABOR LEADERSHIP WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO HEAD THIS POSSIBILITY OFF OR AT LEAST DELAY IT. MORE SURPRISES CAN BE EXPECTED GIVEN CONJUNCTION OF GROWING INTERNAL LABOR PARTY CRISIS AND NEW DIMINUTION OF LABOR PARTY STRENGTH INHLFESSET.

7. WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT MRS MEIR HAS PROSTPONED HER
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CALL ON PRESIDENT KATZIR TO 5 PM LOCAL TIME, AGAIN UNDERLINING
UNCERT
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